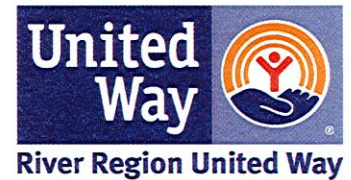


December 5, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554



*Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.*

Dear Ms. Dortch,

The River Region United Way is thankful for the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In our five-county area of central Alabama, our United Way is fighting for the health, education and financial stability of every person by investing in systems like 211 which provide care to the broadest number of individuals.

We acknowledge efforts are needed to create a safe place for all people to call – especially underserved or marginalized populations such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. As we celebrate our 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year, our organization has a long history of reaching out to the underserved and today we partner with multiple stakeholders to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems like mental health and crisis care.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in the River Region a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, we have invested over \$1 million dollars to the success of 211. Moreover, our United Way invests annually more than \$3 million dollars in mental health, substance use, health, education, and other financial stability services. These critical investments position us to be key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

Having another (and separate) three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines, in our community to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our 211 receives calls that are better suited for 911, and our 911 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. We recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and United Way's 211 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

If you have questions or would like to discuss further, you can reach my office at 334.323.2500. Thank you for your time and consideration in addressing this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jimmy Hill".

Jimmy Hill  
President & CEO